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THESIS

**UNCONVENTIONAL COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN
AFGHANISTAN**

by

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June 2006

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UNCONVENTIONAL COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Immediately following the attacks of September 11, 2001, a small number of U.S. Army Special Forces (USSF) invaded the Al Qaeda safe haven of Afghanistan. USSF A-teams, operating with almost total independence, conducted highly successful Unconventional Warfare “through, with, and by” the indigenous Afghan militias of the Northern Alliance. The USSF and their indigenous Afghan armies rapidly deposed the Taliban regime and denied the Al Qaeda terrorists their training and support areas within Afghanistan. The momentum of the initial success achieved by USSF during 2001-2002, however, has been dramatically overshadowed by the inability of follow-on U.S. forces to establish long-term stability in the post-Taliban Afghanistan. Since 2002, the conventional U.S./Coalition forces, which replaced Army USSF as the main U.S. counter-insurgency (COIN) forces, have thus far failed to defeat the re-emerging Taliban/Al Qaeda threat. In fact, 2005 has been the most violent year-to-date for U.S./Coalition forces serving in Afghanistan with 239 U.S. casualties, and President Hamid Karzai’s central Afghan government exhibiting little control outside its major cities. This trend continues in 2006. In this thesis we question the current U.S./Coalition campaign plan, which places emphasis on conventional military forces, not USSF, as the main effort COIN force in Operation Enduring Freedom. We propose an alternative Unconventional COIN model which focuses on population control instead of “clear and sweep operations”, Afghan constabulary-style forces instead of conventional Afghan National Army troops, the importance of “grassroots” intelligence collection at the village level, and the employment of USSF advisors instead of conventional U.S. infantry troops.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Thesis Statement and Methodology: The purpose of this study is to explore an alternative to the current U.S./Coalition COIN strategy in Afghanistan. Our thesis statement is as follows: *We propose that an Unconventional COIN campaign model in Afghanistan will effectively provide the long-term stability needed for a legitimate Afghan government, defeat the lingering Taliban/AQ insurgency, and expedite the withdrawal of conventional U.S. troops from Afghanistan.* In our methodology we identify the problem we found in Afghanistan, analyze this problem, and then create/apply a solution (Appendix B- UW COIN model) that is tailored to solve this problem. This is exactly the *opposite approach* taken by the conventional U.S. Army (i.e. Combined Joint Task Force-76) in Afghanistan, which applied an “off the shelf” conventional COIN concept of operations to an unconventional problem that they failed to understand.

The Afghan Problem: We assert that the central problem in modern Afghanistan is that the Taliban/AQ insurgency remains a significant threat, Afghanistan remains unstable, and the Taliban/AQ network retains freedom of movement and in many “contested” areas. In fact, 2005 has been the most violent year-to-date for U.S./Coalition forces serving in Afghanistan with 239 U.S. casualties, and President Hamid Karzai’s central Afghan government exhibiting little control outside its major cities. We also identify four key issues that have contributed to this instability and violence. These are the “conventionalization” of U.S./Coalition forces and strategy in Afghanistan, the ineffective Afghan National Army (ANA), the poorly trained Afghan National Police (ANP), and mishandling of the Afghan warlords and militias. Further *constraints and limitations* on the Coalition’s COIN efforts in Afghanistan include the issue of increasing Afghan autonomy, eventual U.S. military downsizing and transition to NATO in Afghanistan, and the flow of foreign fighters and insurgent support across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

The Unconventional COIN Campaign Model: In this chapter we present the solution for future stability in Afghanistan – the UW COIN campaign model (see Appendix B- Afghanistan UW COIN Model). This model includes the Constabulary Force (CF), the village Self-Defense Force (SDF), the Movement-to-Contact Force

(MTC), and the Quick Reaction Force (QRF). The main effort force of our Unconventional COIN model is a U.S. Army Special Forces (USSF) advised Afghan CF. The primary function of a CF is to protect and secure the local population through a combination of paramilitary police and military population control tactics. Every “contested” Afghan village should have a squad or platoon-sized element of Afghan CF. USSF and their CF counterparts should also organize, train, and equip company-sized Self-Defense Forces within each Afghan village to support the CF mission. The SDF is a multi-purpose force which can provide additional manpower for CF physical security, basic patrols, checkpoints, and other light infantry operations where additional combat power is needed. The Movement-to-Contact Force is an important supporting effort in our UW COIN model. The purpose of the MTC is to keep pressure on the insurgents by continually patrolling along the Pakistan/Afghan border to deny the insurgents sanctuary. The QRF is a company-sized force of ANA and USSF advisors who operate as the “9-1-1 force” from a centrally located AOB firebase. Other noteworthy components of the UW COIN Campaign model include the importance of “grassroots” intelligence collection, a highly decentralized command and control (C2) structure, methodologies for clearing areas of insurgents and establishing long-term control, and strategies for neutralizing the negative influence of the Afghan warlords.

Key Observations and Conclusions: Based on our study, we believe the following observations best represent the “essence” of successful UW COIN: First, COIN population control strategy works – “clear and sweep operations” generally don’t. Second, paramilitary constabulary forces and local self-defense forces are more effective than conventionally trained and organized troops. Third, “grassroots” intelligence collection at the local level is mission essential. Finally, USSF should be the U.S. “main effort” in lieu of conventional U.S. forces. We make these statements based on the examination of three case studies (Malayan Emergency, CIDG in Vietnam, and USSF in Orgun, Afghanistan); a COIN literature review (McCormick, Komer, Krepinevich, Van Creveld, others); and most relevantly, on our interviews with returning veterans of the Afghan war.

Finally, we must acknowledge that UW COIN is not simply a military problem; in fact, it requires effective counter-insurgents to be both skilled local politicians as well

as unconventional military strategists. The UW COIN model presented in this paper is a significantly “new look” compared to the current conventionally-dominated COIN campaign in Afghanistan. We firmly believe that a U.S. re-alignment to UW COIN, using the ideas discussed in this paper, is the best long-term solution for defeating the reemerging Taliban/AQ insurgency and establishing stability and security in this war-weary land.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AMF – Afghanistan Militia Force

ANA – Afghanistan National Army

ANP – Afghanistan National Police

AO – Area of Operations

AQ – Al Qaeda

ARVN – South Vietnamese Army

CA – Civil Affairs

C2 – Command and Control

CAS – Coordinated Air Support

CAT – Civil Affairs Team

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

CF – Constabulary Force

CIDG – Civilian Irregular Defense Group

CJTF – Combined Joint Task Force

COIN – Counter-insurgency Force

CONOP – Concept of Operation

CJSOTF – Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force

DOD – Department of Defense

FOB – Forward Operating Base

FSB – Forward Support Base

GOA – Government of Afghanistan

GPF – General Purpose Force

GWOT – Global War on Terrorism

HUMINT – Human Intelligence

IED – Improvised Explosive Device

ISAF – International Security Assistance Force

KIA – Killed in Action

MAC-V – US Military Assistance Command Vietnam

MCP – Malayan Communist Party

MEDCAP – Medical Capabilities

MI – Military Intelligence

MPLA – Malayan Peoples Liberation Army

MSR – Main Supply Route

MTC – Movement to Contact

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NLF – National Liberation Front

ODA – Operational Detachment Alpha *also SFODA, also A-team*

ODB – Operational Detachment Bravo *also SFOBD, also B-team*

OEF – Operation Enduring Freedom

OPORD – Operation Order

PRC – Population Resource Control

PRT – Provincial Reconstruction Team

PSYOPS – Psychological Operations

SDF – Self-Defense Force

SFODA – Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha *also ODA, also A-team*

SFOBD – Special Forces Operational Detachment Bravo *also OBD, also B-team*

SITREP – Situation Report

SOF – Special Operation Forces

TPT – Tactical Psychological Operations Team

UN – United Nations

USAF – United States Air Force

USAID – US Agency for International Development

USSF – United States Army Special Forces

UW – Unconventional Warfare

VC – Viet Cong

5W – Who, What, When, Where, and Why Report

I. INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Army in Afghanistan just might grab defeat from the jaws of victory

- Dr. Gordon McCormick

A. BACKGROUND

Immediately following the attacks of September 11, 2001, a small number of U.S. Army Special Forces (USSF) from the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) invaded Afghanistan to avenge the approximately 3,000 Americans who died in New York City and Washington.¹ These SF teams, operating with almost total independence, conducted a highly successful Unconventional Warfare (UW) campaign “through, with, and by” the indigenous Afghan militias of the Northern Alliance. Provided with ample USAF Close Air Support (CAS), the teams of “Green Berets” and their indigenous armies rapidly deposed the Taliban regime and denied Al Qaeda terrorists their Afghan training and support areas.

The U.S. and its Coalition partners followed the highly successful SF intervention with a predominantly conventional counter-insurgency (COIN) effort to completely rid Afghanistan of Taliban and Al Qaeda (AQ) remnants. Subsequently, this war, which was once understood as the most important battlefield in America’s Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), has become a sideshow. In our fifth year of fighting in Afghanistan, the might of the U.S. military’s manpower and money has slowly shifted to the bloodier conflict in Iraq. Many U.S. policymakers, Afghan leaders, and high ranking military officers have all but unofficially declared victory in Afghanistan. President George Bush stated on May 23, 2005 that “Afghanistan is no longer a safe haven for terrorists. Afghanistan is a key partner in the global war on terror. Our troops have fought and will continue to fight side-by-side to defeat the few who want to stop the ambitions of the many.”² Someone, however, has apparently forgotten to tell our enemies that we’ve won. As much as we would like to wish the problem away, the lingering Taliban/AQ insurgency still

¹ “Basic Facts,” U.S. Department of State. (September 11, 2001):
<http://www.state.gov/coalition/cr/fs/12701.htm> .

² “The White House,” President Welcomes Afghan president to White House, (May 23, 2005):
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/afghanistan/> .

effectively prevents the Government of Afghanistan (GOA) from establishing stability outside the major Afghan cities. In fact, 2005 has been the most violent year in Afghanistan since the U.S. intervention in 2001. U.S. casualties are at an all time high, despite approximately 18,000 conventional U.S. troops on the ground. Reports from the field indicate that many Afghan villages and towns still have little or no official Afghan security presence. In spite of these indicators, the U.S. plans to drastically scale down its commitment in Afghanistan, and eventually turn operations over to NATO and the struggling Afghan National Army (ANA). We believe this plan provides little hope for long-term security in Afghanistan. After all, how can we expect future ANA kandaks³, modeled after U.S. light infantry units, to accomplish what battalions of U.S. Marines, Paratroops, and Rangers could not?

1. Purpose/Thesis Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore an alternative to the current U.S./Coalition COIN strategy in Afghanistan.⁴ Our thesis is as follows: *We propose that an Unconventional COIN campaign model in Afghanistan will effectively provide the long-term stability needed for a legitimate Afghan government, defeat the lingering Taliban/AQ insurgency, and expedite the withdrawal of conventional U.S. troops from Afghanistan.* We use the term “Unconventional COIN” to emphasize our focus on the doctrinal execution of COIN executed by U.S. Army Special Forces (USSF) and their indigenous surrogates. COIN operations are defined as “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.”⁵ Likewise, Unconventional Warfare (UW) is “the broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, predominantly conducted through, with or by indigenous or surrogate forces organized, trained, equipped, supported and directed in varying degrees by an external source.”⁶ Unconventional COIN, therefore, is COIN executed primarily

³ A traditional Afghan military unit roughly equal to a U.S. light infantry battalion.

⁴ This paper originally began as a classified project at the Naval Post Graduate School (NPS) in Monterey, CA for the ASD/SOLIC. The original members of our working group included Dr. Gordon McCormick, LTC(P) Eric Wendt, the authors, and two USAF SOF students.

⁵ US DoD Joint Publication 1-02, DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms: (June 9, 2004): <http://www.militarywords.com/result.aspx?term=counterinsurgency&tab=dod> .

⁶ Department of the Army, FM 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 2-1.

“through, with or by” indigenous forces. Further, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines unconventional as “not bound by or in accordance with convention.”⁷ Thus, our model is unconventional in layman’s terms as well, especially when compared to the conventional COIN approach currently being used in Afghanistan. Our model focuses on population control instead of ineffective “clear and sweep” operations, the primary employment of a paramilitary constabulary force instead of a regular military force, “grassroots” human intelligence at the local level instead of traditional top-down military intelligence, and the employment of USSF advisors instead of conventional U.S. combat troops.

2. Methodology

We will employ the following methodology in this paper: The remainder of Chapter I will explore the Afghan problem, the issues with the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan which contribute to the problem, and the constraints and limitations under which we created our model. Chapter II will propose our alternative model; an Unconventional COIN campaign plan (Appendix B) for Afghanistan, based on the application of Dr. Gordon McCormick’s “Diamond Model” (Appendix A). We will provide further support for our model via the selected writings of noted COIN experts (McCormick, Krepinevich, Komer, Cable) as well as interviews from SF veterans with recent “field experience” in Afghanistan. Chapter III will address the major lessons learned during this thesis project with historical support from three important case studies: Appendix C—the British counter-insurgency campaign in Malaya, Appendix D—the U.S. CIDG program in Vietnam, and Appendix E—USSF COIN efforts in Orgun, Afghanistan. It is important to note that our methodology, in order, identifies the problem we found in Afghanistan, analyzes this problem, and then creates/applies a solution (Appendix B—UW COIN model) that is tailored to solve this problem. This is exactly the *opposite approach* taken by the conventional U.S. Army (i.e. Combined Joint Task Force-76) in Afghanistan, which applied an “off the shelf” conventional COIN concept of operations to an unconventional problem that they failed to understand.⁸ The

⁷ “Unconventional,” Merriam-Webster. (n.d.): <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=unconventional>.

⁸ Gordon McCormick, *Intro to Guerrilla Warfare* class notes (Naval Postgraduate School, Spring 2005).

result of this oversight is that conventional U.S. forces in Afghanistan are not properly organized, trained, or equipped for effective COIN operations.

B. THE AFGHAN PROBLEM

We Americans are admittedly the newcomers in Afghanistan; we fully acknowledge that the “Afghan Problem” is Eastern, ageless, extremely complex, and incredibly difficult to summarize in a few pages. The core Afghan problem in 2006, however, is quite clear. In spite of our best efforts at conventional COIN, the Taliban/AQ insurgency remains a significant threat, Afghanistan remains unstable, and the Taliban/AQ network retains freedom of movement and in many “contested” areas. We will examine this central problem in detail. This section also identifies four key issues that have contributed to this instability and violence. These are the “conventionalization” of U.S./Coalition forces and strategy in Afghanistan, the ineffective ANA, the poorly trained Afghan National Police (ANP), and mishandling of the Afghan warlords and militias. We intentionally do not discuss the controversial issue of illegal narcotics production in Afghanistan, as we believe that counter-narcotics are beyond the scope of this paper. We will now focus on the Afghan problem in detail.

1. Increased Taliban/AQ-Related Violence and Instability

In spite of the 18,000 U.S. conventional troops and approximately 65,000 “trained” Afghan troops and police on the ground, multiple sources confirm that 2005 was the most violent year since the 2001. U.S. killed in action (KIA) in Afghanistan during 2005 was a total 99 troops (see Table 1. Summary of Operation Enduring Freedom U.S. Military Casualties); this is greater than in any of the previous four years of the Afghan war.⁹ Reports from the field indicate that the increase is due to the Taliban’s growing use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide car bombs near major U.S. bases or main supply routes (MSRs). After all, few U.S. troops aside from some USSF and Civil Affairs (CA), regularly venture into rural Afghanistan unless on infantry battalion “clear and sweep” type operations.

⁹ “OEF - U.S. Casualties,” (n.d.): <http://icasualties.org/oef/>.

Table 1. Summary of Operation Enduring Freedom U.S. Military Casualties¹⁰

Year	Wounded	Fatalities
2001	35	12
2002	72	48
2003	96	48
2004	214	52
2005*	240	99
TOTAL*	657	259

*as of January 1, 2006

Current reports from Afghanistan still describe frequent insurgent-related violence. The GOA has erratic control of its major population centers, and almost no legitimate presence or control in “frontier” Afghan villages and towns. The GOA’s lack of control over its own population is illustrated by the following snapshot of typical violence which occurred in Afghanistan during the last week of March and the first week of April, 2006:

- **03/29/06 Two service members killed, wounded in action in Helmand Province**
One U.S. Service member and a Coalition service member were killed in action--during an enemy attack on a forward operating base in Helmand Province.
- **03/30/06 Afghan police commander, district chief, 4 others killed**
Dawlat Shah district chief Qadeer Khan and three of his staff were killed by Taliban militants firing rockets and rifles at their car as Khan drove home.
- **03/30/06 Remote-controlled bomb kills three Afghans in Khost**
In southeastern province of Khost, two civilians and a policeman were injured in Ali-Khil district of the province after a remote-controlled device was detonated against a convoy of Afghan police.

¹⁰ “OEF - U.S. Casualties,” (n.d.): <http://icasualties.org/oef/>

- **03/30/06 Police chief and brother killed in Helmand province**
Taliban militants ambushed and killed a police chief and his brother in Helmand Province.
- **03/31/06 Romanian soldiers wounded in Afghanistan**
Two soldiers from the 341st Infantry Battalion “White Sharks” were lightly wounded during their mission at about 30 km South East from Kandahar base, Afghanistan.
- **03/31/06 Blasts rock Canadian base**
The blasts were caused by three 107 millimeter rockets which landed inside the airfield's security fence.
- **04/01/06 Five US troops wounded in Afghan blast**
Five US soldiers were wounded in a roadside bomb blast in the Peche valley of eastern Kunar province, near the border with Pakistan.
- **04/01/06 Clash in S. Afghanistan leaves 6 Taliban dead, villages retaken**
Six Taliban militias have been killed in a clash with government troops since Friday in Kajaki district of Helmand Province and the government troops have pushed back the militants from villages.
- **04/02/06 Taliban kill Turkish engineer, attack police**
Taliban gunmen shot dead a Turkish engineer in Afghanistan on Sunday in the second attack in a week on foreigners working on a road project in the west of the country.
- **04/02/06 4 Afghans killed, US military supply trucks burned in Afghanistan**
Four Afghan police were killed and four trucks carrying supplies to a US military base were set on fire in Afghanistan's southern Province of Helmand.¹¹

In addition to the typical violence stated above, the Taliban/AQ insurgency in Afghanistan has increasingly adopted the use of suicide bombers. The insurgents in Afghanistan are apparently mimicking the success of suicide bombing employed against Coalition forces in Iraq. For example, in 2004 the Afghan insurgents conducted five suicide bombings, and increased that to 17 bombings in 2005. This alarming trend continues as the Taliban/AQ conducted 13 suicide bombings in the first ten weeks of

¹¹ “OEF - U.S. Casualties,” (n.d.): <http://icasualties.org/oef/>.

2006.¹² The insurgents in Afghanistan have clearly learned the effectiveness of suicide bombings in Iraq: the population is de-stabilized, government troops become frustrated and jumpy – often shooting at innocent civilians as suspected bombers, and the government loses legitimacy. The overall effect in Iraq has been mayhem, and several key Coalition partners have withdrawn from Iraq as a result of this instability. The Afghan insurgents are undoubtedly hoping to destabilize their own country in a similar fashion, and possibly intimidate NATO countries from participating in the forthcoming NATO stability operation.

The President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, said that the Newsweek inspired riots in May, and the subsequently heavy-handed ANA/ANP response "shows that Afghanistan's institutions, the police, the army, are not yet ready to handle protests and demonstrations."¹³ Even Afghanistan's top leader acknowledges the GOA's lack of control over its own population. Certainly, it seems that daily life in Afghanistan remains highly unstable and influence over rural Afghanistan is still very much contested by a persistent Taliban/AQ insurgency. The "conventionalization" of U.S. COIN forces in Afghanistan, and their ineffective COIN strategy, is another key factor to account for the returning Taliban/AQ threat.

2. "Conventionalization" of U.S. Forces and Strategy

The operational independence of USSF and Central Intelligence Agency teams in the fall of 2001 in Afghanistan, although highly effective, was short-lived. Eager to become involved in the only shooting war in America's GWOT, the conventional or "regular" U.S. Army and Marines began deploying to Afghanistan as early as the late winter of 2001. The 18,000 conventional U.S. troops that would eventually arrive in Afghanistan would far outnumber the original commitment of a few hundred USSF operators who orchestrated the downfall of the Taliban regime (see Table 2: "Conventionalization" of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan). The Afghan case clearly illustrates that merely adding more conventional U.S. troops to the COIN fight does not guarantee victory.

¹² Gareth Harding, "Afghans Blame Suicide Bombings on Foreigners," *M&C News*, (Mar 14, 2006): http://news.monstersandcritics.com/southasia/article_1137009.php.

¹³ "Four Killed in Afghan Anti-U.S. Riots," (May 11, 2005): <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,156169,00.html>.

Table 2. “Conventionalization” of U.S. Forces in Afghanistan

Date	December 2001	November 2005
U.S. Command	TF-Dagger ¹⁴	CJTF-76
Composition	Element of 1/5 th SFG, 2/5 th SFG, 3/5 th SFG, HQ 5 th SFG, other SOF, allied SOF, and CIA units ¹⁵	82 nd ABN, 173 rd ABN, 158 th AVN, B/2/6 th CAV, F/159 th AVN, 65 th MI, 391 st EN, 864 th EN, 141 st IN, 249 th MED, A/44 SIG, 155 SIG, 580 SIG, 749 th ORD, 789 th EOD, 11 th ASOG, 92 nd MP, 298 th EN, 74 th LRSD, CJSOTF-A, other U.S. Army, Marines, and Navy units. ¹⁶
Strength	Less than 500 SOF operators	Approximately 18,000 soldiers

There are three key factors that have contributed to the “conventionalization” of the Afghanistan campaign. These are: the establishment of the conventional Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF); the prevalence of conventional “clear and sweep” operations; and the marginalization of U.S. Special Forces. First, the establishment of a conventional command in Afghanistan, currently called CJTF-76, has been counter-productive in a war that we assert is “unconventional” by nature. The CJTF is commanded by a regular Army general. The highest ranking Special Forces officer in Afghanistan, a colonel, doesn’t even have a “seat at the table” during many important decision meetings. It is *counter-intuitive* that a conventional Army command is in charge of what is clearly an unconventional war. Second, the dominance of a conventional Army mindset is aptly demonstrated by the U.S. Army’s insistence on conducting large scale “clear and sweep” operations to “hunt the enemy.” Operation *Anaconda* (March 2002), Operation *Mountain Viper* (August 2003), Operation *Avalanche* (December 2003), Operation *Mountain Storm* (July 2004), and Operation *Lightning Freedom* (December 2004) are all prime examples of completely ineffective “clear and sweep operations.”¹⁷ They did not work in Vietnam, and they aren’t working now in Afghanistan. Ironically, at least one conventional infantry commander in Afghanistan admitted that such operations are only conducted to

¹⁴ TF-Dagger was the UW SOF task force commanded by COL Mulholland, 5th SFG. It essentially became CJSOTF-A.

¹⁵ Interview with Special Forces officers, Ft. Bragg, NC, September 26, 2005.

¹⁶ “The Army as of OCT 27,” *Army Times*, 7 November 2005, 9.

¹⁷ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*. (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, November 8, 2005), 22.

“get his bored paratroopers out of the wire.”¹⁸ Finally, USSF, who are the Army’s experts at UW and COIN, have become marginalized in Afghanistan. The immense potential of USSF has been diminished through chronic misuse by conventional commanders. We believe that USSF itself must also share in the blame for this misuse, as USSF has voluntarily shifted away from the “bread and butter” UW COIN missions in Afghanistan. USSF Operational Detachment Alphas (SFODAs) stopped large-scale “through, with, and by” operations with indigenous Afghan forces, and shifted to smaller operations on the Pakistan border collecting intelligence and hunting terrorists with direct action (DA). We believe that this shift of focus was a serious mistake, and our proposed model calls for USSF to return to its more traditional UW role of operating “through, with, and by” Afghan forces.

3. Ineffective Afghan National Army (ANA)

The primary indigenous internal security force in Afghanistan is the ANA. USSF initially organized, trained, and equipped the ANA in 2002 to quickly fill the power vacuum left by the defeated Taliban regime.¹⁹ Over time, however, U.S. and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) conventional forces became responsible for training the ANA. The majority of USSF were instead tasked with more “important” missions: preparing for the war in Iraq, or hunting remaining Taliban insurgents and AQ on the Afghan-Pakistan border. The ANA was placed under the charge of U.S. Army National Guard soldiers from Task Force Phoenix, and was accordingly organized, trained, and employed chiefly along “conventional” U.S. light infantry models. In other words, the ANA has been modeled for the past three years in the image of our own conventional Army. The ANA has recently established centralized “brigade-sized” headquarters at Herat, Gardez, Kandahar, and Mazar-e-Sharif. The ANA’s “heavy brigade” is being trained at Pol-e-Sharke.²⁰ Reports from the field, however, indicate that the ANA is still incapable of independent operations at the battalion (or “kandak”) level.²¹ Most ANA operations are actually company-sized units or smaller, which are

¹⁸ Interview with Special Forces officers, Ft. Bragg, NC, September 2005.

¹⁹ “Global Security, Afghanistan – Army,” (n.d.):
<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/army.htm>.

²⁰ Katzman, 29.

²¹ Interview with Special Forces officers, Ft. Bragg, NC, September 2005.

typically employed to augment the Coalition's conventional COIN forces. ANA missions encompass the usual list of conventional COIN tactics to include "presence patrols" and movement-to-contact (i.e. "clear and sweep") operations. While current strength of the ANA is estimated at 24,300 troopers with another 6,000 in training at the Kabul Military Training facility - and these numbers are considered optimistic by most - desertion is reported to be a constant problem in the ANA. One USSF officer we interviewed reported that up to 50% of ANA troops go AWOL on payday because they must walk to get their paychecks home.²² The Coalition's goal is to train 70,000 ANA soldiers by 2007. Building the ANA is an investment that has not come cheap; the 2005 GAO reported that the U.S. spent \$4.1 billion thus far to stand-up this force.²³

The key issue with the ANA is the following: the ANA has been organized, trained, and equipped to operate like a U.S. light infantry unit – one of the worst models possible for this type of conflict. We have trained the ANA for conventional COIN operations such as ineffective "presence patrols" and "clear and sweep" operations. These movement-to-contact tactics have continuously proven to be ineffective for providing long-term stability in COIN conflicts. The U.S. Army made a very similar mistake during Vietnam when it trained the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) in our own "conventional" image.²⁴ The conventional U.S. Army was not a proper COIN role-model for the ARVN in 1965, and it's not a good role-model for the ANA in 2005. The Coalition's future vision for the ANA, however, involves large "regular" Afghan units which can operate in lieu of the Coalition's light infantry battalions. We somehow expect the ANA battalions to accomplish what battalions of U.S. Marines, Paratroopers, and Rangers have been unable to accomplish: defeat a now growing Islamic insurgency and establish long-term stability in Afghanistan.

We believe that the ANA as it is currently organized is the wrong force for establishing long-term stability in Afghanistan. USSF needs to reshape the ANA (and ANP as we'll discuss in the next section) into a viable COIN force – as our UW COIN

²² Interview with Special Forces officers, Ft. Bragg, NC, September 2005.

²³ Katzman, 30.

²⁴ Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., *The Army and Vietnam*. (Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 22-23.

model will argue in detail. While the ANA is one of the keys to long-term stability in Afghanistan, we assert that a “regular army” outfit is not the best solution for securing long-term stability in Afghanistan’s future. Rather, a paramilitary police force, or constabulary-styled force, is the better choice.

4. Untrained Afghan National Police (ANP)

Regardless of their current poor condition, we believe that the future role of the ANP will be center stage in any effective long-term COIN strategy in Afghanistan. The Coalition claims that approximately 40,000 ANP are currently on duty, and projects the ANP strength to reach 62,000 by 2007.²⁵ While these numbers seem impressive, the level of training, equipment, and leadership in the ANP, however, are highly questionable. For example, German efforts to train the ANP have resulted in a mere 3,700 trained “police commanders.”²⁶ Furthermore, the lack of leadership and guidance within the ANP was clearly reflected in their recent operations in Jalalabad to quell anti-American rioters. The reality is that the ANP has minimal control in Afghan urban centers, and almost no presence or control over the rural Afghan villages. Corruption remains a huge problem. The ANP is the primary Afghan agency responsible for internal security within Afghanistan, and as such it should become the cadre of our proposed Afghanistan’s Constabulary Force (CF). This will obviously take significant work and few organizations are up to the task of training the ANP; however, we assert USSF is one such organization. The current ANP is ill led, under trained, under manned, under gunned, and most importantly, not deployed in adequate strength (or often not deployed at all) to the areas of Afghanistan that need them most – the Afghan villages and towns.²⁷

5. Threatening Afghan Warlords and Militias

Afghan warlords and their irregular militias are as old as Afghanistan itself, and the “warlord problem” is perhaps one of the most important topics this paper examines. The warlords and their militias had, and in many rural Afghan areas continue to have, total control of the local populations at the village and town level. Naturally, the GOA is threatened by the warlords’ power and their militias – as these militias were often the

²⁵ Katzman, 31.

²⁶ Ibid, 32.

²⁷ Interview with Special Forces officers, Ft. Bragg, NC, September 2005.

most effective and well-equipped military forces in the area. This is a justifiable concern for leaders such as Afghan President Hamid Karzai, especially when we consider Afghanistan's long history of warlordism, rebellion, and the frequent occurrences of warlords defecting to the enemy's side (i.e. currently the Taliban's) side. The GOA has attempted to neutralize the modern-day warlords by quietly assimilating them into the new GOA as provincial governors or ministers. Some warlords have been isolated, and a few who won't cooperate with the GOA have even been targeted as pro-Taliban. The GOA fears the warlords' irregular militias most of all, and has taken great steps to see that the Afghan Militia Forces (AMF) were completely demobilized. The AMF, which formerly worked with USSF, was a highly effective indigenous COIN force. Ironically, AMF were perhaps the best COIN troops available to the GOA, as they had excellent access to the informal social networks – and much needed intelligence – in their areas of operation. Our sources from the field state that the United Nations (UN) sponsored demobilization program is a bad joke – the promised “vocational retraining programs” are virtually nonexistent and the militias have actually retained most of their good weapons.²⁸ Thus, the demobilization of the AMF has created two problems. First, the most effective indigenous COIN unit that existed in Afghanistan was effectively disbanded (a few were recruited as border guards, but most former AMF continue to wait for vocational retraining). Second, we now have a large population of former belligerents who have no desire to drop their guns. Listless ex-AMF militiamen are actively turning to a life of criminal activity, and worse yet, are recruiting material for the Taliban.

The next section of this paper will explain the constraints under which we have formulated our Afghan UW COIN model.

C. FURTHER CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

1. Afghan Government Approval

The U.S. wants to support a free and independent GOA. That fact established, we acknowledge that the U.S. and Coalition forces in Afghanistan can no longer conduct unilateral military or civil actions within Afghanistan. A truly independent GOA must stand on its own one day, and as such, U.S. commanders must put an “Afghan face” on

²⁸ Interview with Special Forces officers, Ft. Bragg, NC, September 2005.

all missions. U.S. commands will soon feel even more restrictions as the GOA becomes increasingly involved in the mission approval processes. President Karzai recently stated in public that the battle against the insurgents requires “a stronger political approach now.”²⁹ In regards to military force, President Karzai commented “I don’t think there is a big need for military activity in Afghanistan anymore” and that “searching Afghan homes without the authorization of the government of Afghanistan is something that should stop now.”³⁰ Karzai’s comments are in response to pressure from the Afghan provincial governors, many of whom are powerful former warlords. The governors are increasingly dissatisfied with U.S. house-to-house searches and are demanding that foreign military forces seek GOA approval before private homes are entered.³¹ The Afghan people are tired of having their privacy violated. Further, Afghan homes are the traditional sanctuary for Muslim women, who traditionally use their “compounds” as safe havens to shelter themselves from the eyes of the public. The use of U.S. Close Air Support (CAS) against known insurgent strongpoints is also being increasingly frowned upon. President Karzai believes “the use of [U.S.] air power is something that may not be effective now because we have moved forward.”³² The U.S. occupation troops also serve as a constant reminder to the Afghan people that the GOA is weak and can’t handle its own internal affairs. The reality is that U.S. and Coalition military forces will face increased constraints from the GOA in the near future. We believe these constraints will force us to abandon conventional COIN tactics and strategy in the near future of Afghanistan. Both the large U.S. “sweep operations” and the air campaigns that have been used to root insurgents out of their safe areas will no longer be sanctioned. Afghanistan’s future ability to quell its insurgency will increasingly depend on our work through the ANA, the ANP, and our NATO partners.

What does the near-term situation look like for the U.S. COIN effort in Afghanistan? We believe that as conventional COIN tactics become greatly restricted, the focus must once again return to USSF to complete the counter-insurgent mission.

²⁹ Paul Watson, “Karzai Calls for a Shift in Battle Against Taliban,” *Los Angeles Times*. (September 21, 2005): <http://proquest.com>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

USSF's small size and signature – its flexibility and ability to work with indigenous forces, its specialization in UW and COIN operations, and its minimal logistical requirements – all make USSF the force of choice in Afghanistan. Regarding the impending operational limitations from the GOA, USSF has proven its ability to battle insurgents “through, with, and by” indigenous troops while operating within such host nation constraints. Ultimately, we believe that a constabulary force, such as the model we will propose in the second chapter of this paper, offers the best model for the future integration of USSF, ANA, ANP and NATO conventional forces to control the Afghan population, quell the insurgency, and sustain a lasting peace in the rural villages of Afghanistan.

2. U.S. Military Downsizing and NATO Control

Coalition operations within Afghanistan can be broken down into two major commands: Coalition combat forces organized under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), and our NATO allies grouped under the command known as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The primary mission of the OEF force, which is poised primarily in the “hot” southern and eastern portions of Afghanistan, is to combat the Taliban/AQ insurgents. The current U.S. forces command, called CJTF-76, has approximately 18,000 U.S. troops and 1,600 troops from six Coalition countries.³³ OEF soldiers do not routinely conduct “peacekeeping” operations but are involved mainly in combat operations, such as “clear and sweep” missions. OEF troops from TF Phoenix are also responsible for training the ANA. For a short time the ANA was being trained and equipped by ISAF, but poor ANA troop performance returned the building and employment of the ANA to the responsibility of the OEF command.

While OEF is focused on the counterinsurgency mission, ISAF is focused on “stabilization, demobilization, and security sector reform” through the development of the ANP, facilitating the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), and providing a NATO peacekeeping presence.³⁴ Currently, ISAF is in control of the western and northern portions of the country with approximately 8,500 troops from 26 NATO

³³ Katzman, 22.

³⁴ Julian E. Barnes, “The NATO Perspective,” *U.S. News and World Report*. (October 3, 2005): <http://proquest.com>.

countries and 11 non-NATO countries.³⁵ Italy is presently in command of the six-month leadership role for the ISAF peacekeeping mission, which supposedly enables the Afghan government to “expand its authority beyond the capital; providing a safe environment for elections; spreading the rule of law and reconstruction.”³⁶

The PRTs are ISAFs most effective element. The U.S. Department of Defense created the PRTs as a platform to provide secure areas for international aid workers beyond the capital and into the rural villages of Afghanistan in December 2002.³⁷ Of the 19 existing PRTs, 11 are U.S. led (OEF controlled) and six are ISAF (NATO controlled). The U.S. PRTs consist of 50-100 U.S. military, Defense Department civil affairs, representatives of U.S. AID and other agencies, and allied personnel.³⁸ Each U.S. PRT operates from a Forward Support Base (FSB) with medical resources, helicopters, and reaction forces.³⁹ Aside from providing security for reconstruction efforts, PRTs have greatly expanded the GOA’s influence to areas lacking government presence. The PRTs have been deemed highly successful and expansion of the program is forthcoming.

The outlook of future operations in Afghanistan is strongly leaning toward an ISAF-OEF merger with eventual NATO theater dominance. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld have reportedly made an agreement with NATO to merge the NATO/ISAF peacekeeping mission with the OEF combat mission as early as 2006.⁴⁰ This agreement falls in line with a 20% reduction of U.S. forces in 2006, decreasing U.S. troop strength to fewer than 14,000.⁴¹ More U.S. troop reductions are certainly on the way.

³⁵ Agence France-Presse, “Afghanistan: The ISAF peacekeeping force and its expanding Afghan role.”(October 6, 2005): <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/VBOL-6GWJG4?OpenDocument>.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Katzman, 26.

³⁸ Agence France-Presse, “Afghanistan: The ISAF peacekeeping force and its expanding Afghan role.”(October 6, 2005): <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/VBOL-6GWJG4?OpenDocument>.

³⁹ Sean M. Maloney, “Afghanistan Four Years On: An Assessment,” *Parameters*. (Fall, 2005): <http://proquest.com>.

⁴⁰ Katzman, 28.

⁴¹ Bradley Graham, “US Considers Afghanistan Troop Cut,” *Washington Post*. (September 14, 2005): <http://boston.com>.

Furthermore, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer is adding an additional 6,000 troops in 2006 to the ISAF force, bringing NATO soldiers to 15,000 in Afghanistan.⁴² The plan calls for these additional ISAF troops to replace OEF forces in the insurgent plagued southern border area in May 2006, leaving the U.S. primarily responsible for Afghanistan's eastern border with Pakistan.

We believe that the reduction of US military forces in Afghanistan and the lessening influence of U.S. commanders are inevitable. Possibly within the next three years, NATO will be responsible for all operations within Afghanistan. The operational focus will shift from COIN to peacekeeping. We also believe, based on U.S. experiences in the Balkans with NATO, that conventional U.S. commanders will have even more operational restrictions and NATO "red-tape" to cut through, aside from the previously discussed Afghan government mandates. Our Unconventional COIN model, which employs USSF advisors instead of large conventional units as the main effort force, is ideal in an environment in which the number of U.S. troops committed to Afghanistan will most likely be limited. USSF troops are force multipliers – doctrinally, one 12-man detachment can advise an indigenous battalion-sized force in combat. Not only do SF advisory units require far less troops than conventional COIN campaigns, SF soldiers are often able to circumvent much of the foreseen red-tape associated with an international NATO command.

3. International Borders

International networks of armed groups, connected by opium trafficking, ethnic ties, and Islamic fundamentalism, are all directly linked to the ancient land that we call Afghanistan. Kashmir, Chechnya, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Iran, and Central Asia are intertwined in the exchange of illegal goods (weapons, drugs, human trafficking, emeralds, etc.) and additionally provide an abundance of foreign fighters for the Taliban/AQ insurgency in Afghanistan. Cross-border social ties connect these state-destabilizing networks and dramatically undermine the struggling GOA's efforts to establish lasting stability.

⁴² Paul Ames, "Extra 6,000 Troops for NATO Afghan Mission," *The Scotsman*. (October 5, 2005): <http://news.scotsman.com>.

Current reporting indicates that “covert state support for armed groups is on the rise, undermining not only the new government in Kabul but peace in the region.”⁴³ Within Afghanistan and its bordering countries, everyday economic activities outside formal legal structures are accepted as legitimate to a portion of the population. This “gray market” exploits the lack of governmental control in border areas.⁴⁴ Regional warlords, who still control most of rural Afghanistan, receive an abundance of income by taxing the illegal trade. The “gray market” in Afghanistan breeds numerous forms of corruption, both at state and tribal level, which fosters an atmosphere of continuing instability throughout the country. More importantly, the “gray market” provides key funding and recruitment for the Taliban/AQ insurgency.

Afghanistan’s eastern border with Pakistan is the country’s most troublesome region. During the mid 1990’s, Pakistan was a key instigator in assisting the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. Pakistan provided sanctuary, military training, weapons, and financial support to the Taliban and also to AQ. In addition to the history of Taliban support in this “ungoverned” area, ethnic Pashtun ties (a poverty stricken and largely uneducated people who populate both sides of the border) both actively and passively aid the insurgency. The Durand Line, which forms the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, “has fostered emigration, smuggling, drug trafficking, and recruitment to militant groups in territories where the Pakistani and Afghan states have been unwilling or unable to maintain firm control.”⁴⁵

One of the major international border-related constraints that we must consider is that OEF forces are unable to cross the Durand Line in Pakistan to pursue Taliban/AQ insurgents and rid them of their sanctuary. The Taliban and AQ have complete freedom of movement, and often seek refuge in their safe havens in the Pakistani mountains. While much effort has been made to increase “military to military cooperation” with the Pakistani government, we believe there is little chance that OEF forces will soon conduct movement-to-contact operations in western Pakistan. This makes the porous Durand

⁴³ Barnett R. Rubin and Andrea Armstrong, “Regional Issues in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan,” *World Policy Journal*. (Spring 2003):<http://proquest.com>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Line a hazard to stability operations. In fact, we believe that controlling the Afghan villages near the Durand Line should be the main focus of U.S. COIN efforts, and our model in Chapter II reflects this assessment. A combined U.S.-Afghan constabulary force working to control the populations in the remote Eastern border villages, in conjunction with a mobile movement-to-contact (MTC) force that continually monitors and patrols the Pakistan border, is the solution Afghanistan needs to counter not only the infiltration of insurgents, the influence of the warlords, and the movement of illegal weapons and drugs, but also to deny the insurgents any safe havens in this currently lawless area.

This concludes our definition of the “Afghan Problem” and the discussion of the constraints and limitation associated with it. The next chapter will describe our proposed alternative model – an Unconventional COIN campaign plan for Afghanistan.

II. UNCONVENTIONAL COIN CAMPAIGN MODEL

But the conditions of small wars are so diversified, the enemy's mode of fighting is often so peculiar, and the theatres of operations present such singular features, that irregular warfare must generally be carried out on a method totally different from the stereotyped system.

– Colonel C.E. Callwell⁴⁶

A. CONSTABULARY FORCES AND SUPPORTING FORCES

In this chapter we will present the solution for the problem in Afghanistan – the UW Campaign Model. The major “moving pieces” of the UW COIN campaign model are: the Constabulary Force (CF), the village Self-Defense Force (SDF), the Movement-to-Contact Force (MTC), and the Quick Reaction Force (QRF). Readers should refer to Appendix B (Afghanistan UW COIN Model) during this section for a graphical concept sketch.

1. Constabulary Forces (CF)

The main effort force or “core” of our Unconventional COIN model is a USSF advised Afghan CF. The primary function of a CF is to protect and secure the local population through a combination of paramilitary police and military population control tactics. Every “contested” Afghan village should have a squad or platoon-sized element of Afghan CF (see Appendix B). Members of the CF should ideally be ANP recruited directly out of the AO where they are employed. Thus, CF members not only represent the locals within their home town or village, but also bring their own pre-existing social networks into the fold. Where ANP are unavailable, ANA troops may be substituted until locals can be recruited and trained as ANP. Unlike the current ANA, which is trained and then deployed into unfamiliar areas, a CF trooper must know his town or village, the terrain, and the local population. A CF must be competent in its protection role, but most importantly, it must be connected to the local community through family, friends, and daily business.

⁴⁶ C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles & Practices* (Nebraska: University Press of Nebraska, 1996), 23.

CF and their USSF advisors must be permanently garrisoned in the Afghan village in which they provide security in ANP squad and platoon-sized elements (see Appendix B). Conventional “movement-to-contact” strategies, which attempt to clear an area of insurgents, only serve to temporarily establish security for the town or village inhabitants. The government troops eventually depart the area of operations and relinquish protection of the locals. In contrast, a CF permanently holds the ground by living and working in the threatened area. In order to defeat an insurgency, two key goals must be achieved: one must be able to first “protect the population, and second, “isolate them from the guerrillas.”⁴⁷ A local force that is comprised of community members who can adequately and consistently maintain the peace will earn the trust of the town/village inhabitants. If the locals are protected from the insurgents by the CF, they will eventually begin to entrust the CF and will no longer provide support for the insurgents. More importantly, a population that feels protected will begin to provide the government with information about the insurgents.

A CF maintains security and protects the population from insurgent violence through population control measures. These include conducting daily foot and vehicle patrols; building a network of local informants; establishing checkpoints with shake-downs and identification checks; conducting vehicle and house searches; and by executing precision raids when supported by *actionable intelligence*. This denies the enemy his “critical requirements and critical capabilities” networks which he needs to sustain the insurgency.⁴⁸ Most importantly, a proper CF will deny the insurgents’ sanctuary within the population. Insurgents require sanctuary to maintain their networks. Insurgent networks must move people, weapons, ammunition, and communications. Most insurgent networks depend on passive or active support from the population in order to be effective. A competent CF will deny the insurgents their sanctuary, their freedom of movement, and the popular support requirement that is essential for their

⁴⁷ Joel E. Hamby, “Civil-Military Operations: Joint Doctrine and the Malayan Emergency,” *Joint Forces Quarterly* (Autumn 2002): 55.

⁴⁸ Lee Grubbs and Michael Forsyth, “Is There a Deep Fight in Counterinsurgency?,” *Military Review* July-August (2005): 28-30.

survival. The guerillas will no longer have the anonymity they rely upon, thus limiting their effectiveness and isolating the insurgents from their center of gravity: *population control*.

2. Self-Defense Force (SDF)

USSF and their CF counterparts should organize, train, and equip company-sized Self-Defense Forces within each “contested” Afghan village to support the CF mission (see Appendix B). The SDF is a multi-purpose force which can provide additional manpower for CF physical security, basic patrols, checkpoints, and other light infantry operations where additional combat power is needed. The SDF replaces the traditional (and much feared) local militias with a force that is both GOA controlled and sanctioned. It also provides the means for the locals to protect themselves against the insurgents through a “neighborhood watch” concept. The CF is a small element by design, usually platoon-sized or smaller, but the ability to augment itself when necessary with manpower from a light infantry SDF is a significant combat multiplier. As such control of the SDFs must be closely controlled and regulated by USSF. Finally, the SDF troopers (who live and work in the local population) could be an excellent source of information for the CF.

3. Movement to Contact Force (MTC)

The Movement-to-Contact Force is an important supporting effort in our UW COIN model. It is comprised of ANA kandaks and their USSF advisors from the AOB. The purpose of the MTC is to keep pressure on the insurgents by continually patrolling along the Pakistan/Afghan border to deny the insurgents sanctuary (see Appendix B). This technique of rooting out the insurgents was similarly conducted by U.S. Marines and Nicaraguan National Guard troops against the Sandinistas in the El Chipote region during the 1930’s Banana Wars. This combined force actively patrolled the area forcing the guerrillas into a zone where they could be engaged by aerial bombardment.⁴⁹ In Afghanistan, the MTC force mission should be to doggedly pursue the insurgents in the rural areas outside of the villages. Insurgents who return into the CF controlled villages should be identified and killed or captured, thereby “affording them no safe haven,

⁴⁹ Larry E. Cable, *Conflicts of Myths* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 100.

respite, or place to hide.”⁵⁰ If a sizable insurgent force surfaces in their village, then the constabulary force can call in the Quick Reaction Force (QRF) for assistance.

4. Quick Reaction Force (QRF)

In the event that the CF is threatened by a stronger insurgent, a QRF must be available 24/7 upon request. The QRF is a company-sized force of ANA and their USSF advisors who operate as the “9-1-1 force” from a centrally located AOB firebase (see Appendix B). The use of a QRF is not a new concept to U.S. doctrine and has been a standard operating procedure in both conventional and unconventional operations. The typical SOF QRF is an air assault force that can quickly arrive with a platoon-sized element of Rangers or other elite infantry on very short notice. However, helicopter QRFs are impractical in the Afghan mountains due to severe weight restrictions. Our QRF must be ground-mobile and within a short drive to the SFODA villages. The QRF should be reinforced by USAF CAS if needed.

5. Special Forces Advisory Role

We believe that there are three reasons why USSF is the best choice to organize, train, equip, and advise a future Afghan CF. First, USSF soldiers are the U.S. Army’s specialists in UW. USSF are trained to conduct “military and paramilitary operations, predominantly conducted through, with or by indigenous or surrogate forces.”⁵¹ SFODA personnel are specially selected and trained to become immersed within the local population and culture. This is essential for U.S. advisors that must live and work with the CF in the rural Afghan villages and towns. Second, USSF soldiers are experienced noncommissioned officers and officers, frequently with multiple combat tours – there are no privates on SFODAs. These leaders are especially adept at highly independent operations and require little supervision. They are ideally suited for the decentralized nature of COIN in Afghanistan’s “indian country.” Finally, USSF is one of the few U.S. military units to have cracked the code at employing “grassroots” Human Intelligence (HUMINT) in the field. Local intelligence is of key importance to achieve population

⁵⁰Larry E. Cable, *Conflicts of Myths* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 154.

⁵¹ *Department of the Army, FM 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 2-1.

control and situational awareness at the village level. In fact, the next section of this chapter will specifically focus on the importance of HUMINT at the local or “grassroots” level.

6. Role of U.S. Conventional Forces

We will now address the role of U.S. conventional troops, commonly referred to by SOF as General Purpose Forces (GPF), in our UW COIN campaign plan. We assert that U.S. conventional forces must be the supporting effort to the main effort: USSF and their indigenous Afghan counterparts. The GPF should be responsible for three basic supporting missions. First, the GPF must secure the FOBs, the CJSOTF, key facilities, airports, and re-supply routes. Second, conventional forces may be decentralized in squad or platoon sized elements to reinforce USSF at especially “hot” firebases and team houses. Finally, GPF infantry may be used in limited movement-to-contact type operations when the following two conditions exist: First, the MTC operation must be supported by actionable intelligence. Second, the operation must be conducted in partnership with an equal or greater number of ANA troops and their USSF advisors. All GPF MTC operations must be approved by the local USSF commander responsible for the target AO.

B. COIN INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION

1. McAdam’s Theory of Pre-existing Social Networks

We will begin our discussion of COIN intelligence collection by asking the following question: why do some indigenous forces benefit from “grassroots” support (i.e. intelligence tips) in the Afghan villages, while others such as the ANA do not? An explanation can be found in Doug McAdams work regarding the mobilization of social movements and networks.

In *Social Movements and Networks*, Doug McAdams states three basic tenets which explain why people are drawn to social movements such as insurgencies. First, he states “recruits to a movement tend to know others who are already involved … *prior social ties* (italics added) encourage entrance into a movement.”⁵² McAdam’s second

⁵² Doug McAdams, “Beyond Structural Analysis: Toward A More Dynamic Understanding of Social Movements,” in *Social Movements and Networks* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 285.

point is that “most social movements develop within established local settings … e.g. recognized leaders, communication channels, networks of trust.”⁵³ Third, “emerging movements tend to spread along established lines of interaction.”⁵⁴ Because an insurgency is a battle for control over the population, we believe that McAdam’s theory aptly applies to both insurgents (i.e. the Taliban and Al Qaeda movements) as well as the GOA’s counter-insurgent movement. McAdam’s tenets make it very apparent that effective indigenous COIN forces must have access to pre-existing social networks within the communities in which they operate. Further, the best indigenous COIN forces that have access to the local Afghan villages are those that are recruited from the local population.

As stated, our belief is that the current Afghan war will be won or lost within the Afghan villages, especially those on the volatile Afghan-Pakistan frontier. Thus, our “main effort” indigenous COIN force must have access to the pre-existing social networks within these villages. We assert that this can readily come from a paramilitary CF that is primarily recruited from the local population, lives in the local population, operates in the community on a daily basis, and provides 24-hour/seven-day-a-week security for the local population. Just like a precinct of neighborhood beat cops in New York City, a CF can operate within an Afghan village with full access to the grassroots-level social networks that McAdams speaks of.

2. “Grassroots” Intelligence Collection

The problem with COIN intelligence collection is that the insurgents initially have a highly *asymmetric* information advantage. Unlike the conventionally minded counter-insurgents, the insurgents live in the population and are able to clearly identify their enemy. The insurgents know the face of their enemy, where they live, and where they operate. In addition, the insurgents have a superior knowledge of the local terrain. Insurgents can hit their targets and then blend into the population to regroup and wait for another opportunity to attack. Smart guerrillas will only fight on their terms when they feel they have an advantage over their enemy. Conventional COIN forces, therefore, find

⁵³ Doug McAdams, “Beyond Structural Analysis: Toward A More Dynamic Understanding of Social Movements,” in *Social Movements and Networks* (Oxford University Press, 2003), 285.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

themselves in an intelligence vacuum because they lack popular support. USSF and their indigenous CF, however, have the ability to tip the intelligence scale into the COIN forces favor. Operating *by, with, and through* the locals, USSF/CF can gain the trust and credibility needed in order for the local people to provide information about the insurgents. The CF provides 24/7 protection for the local population, and can prevent the insurgents from taking retribution against government informants. A “popular” CF, armed with tips and information, can then target insurgents and destabilize the insurgent support network. We firmly believe that the establishment of intelligence networks at the “grassroots” level (i.e., in the Afghan villages) is the most important element to defeating insurgency.

C. COIN COMMAND AND CONTROL

1. Decentralization of COIN Command and Control

We believe two principles best describe “higher” command and control (C2) in UW COIN: First, higher commands (AOBs, FOBs, CJSOTF and up) *must decentralize their authority and resources to the lowest level possible* – in our model this is down to the SFODAs. To paraphrase one successful battalion commander in Iraq: commanders must decentralize until it feels uncomfortable – and then decentralize even more. COIN, unlike conventional combat, is a bottom-up fight and decision making ability must be delegated to the lowest level. The classic counter example of this has been CJSOTF-A’s past obsession with Concept of Operation or “CONOP” approval before every routine ODA operation in Afghanistan. CONOPs started out quite reasonably as a 5W (i.e. who, what, when, where, why) report for CJSOTF’s information and coordination. Within a few months the CONOP evolved into a painful, multi-page digital OPORD (Operation Order) which had to be submitted via satellite radio and approved by the ODA’s Forward Operating Base (FOB) or CJSOTF before the ODA could even “leave the wire” of their firebase. Ironically, the FOB or CJSOTF rarely had any more information on the SFODA’s proposed mission or target than the ODA could provide, thus “mission approval” was often a superfluous drill. Some of the most successful ODAs simply ignored the CONOP rules and greatly increased their reports of “chance enemy contact.” True, higher commands such as the FOB and CJSOTF need to be informed of operations

for *coordination* – but this can easily be accomplished by describing future operations in the ODA’s daily Situation Reports (SITREP) – a formal report due every 24 hours. ODA commanders must be trusted to conduct operations within their commander’s intent and guidance. We believe that excessive CONOPs requirements can breed a “mother may I atmosphere” and have little place in the UW COIN fight.⁵⁵

This brings us to our second point: ODA commanders must be the absolute “master and commander” of their sectors, and the ODA commander is the chief representative of the U.S. government for his village. This means that all supporting elements CA, PRTs, PSYOPS, General Purpose Force (GPF), visiting Special Operations Forces (SOF) units etc., regardless of rank or “tier level” must fall under the local ODA commander’s authority. To clarify: the GPF or other CJSOTF units should not conduct operations in an ODA’s sector without the knowledge and sanction of the ODA commander. This serves two purposes: first, it prevents other commanders/units from diminishing the ODA commander’s role as the local power broker and chief representative of the U.S. government. The ODA commander’s influence within the village is vital when dealing with the local tribal and religious leaders – there can be no question concerning his status and power. Second, it prevents non-uniformed (and likely armed) members of the ODA’s SDF or intelligence networks from being killed by over-zealous troops not familiar with the local area or people.

Finally, ODA commanders that do not exhibit sound judgment or decision making should be immediately relieved.

2. The Role of the AOB, FOB, and CJSOTF

The AOB, commanded by a USSF major, performs the primary role of C2 and logistical support for up to six ODAs within their specified area of operation (AO).⁵⁶ AOBs must operate forward from their SF firebases. Our model calls for the AOB to control a kandak (or battalion) of ANA troops, a Tactical PSYOPS Team (TPT), a Civil Affairs Team (CAT), a military intelligence (MI) section, other support sections as needed, and if available, a U.S. infantry element for added firebase security. The AOB

⁵⁵ The 3rd SFG recently reported using “30 day CONOPs” with lists of pre-approved missions and targets. This is a step in the right direction; however, we still believe a short 5W report (for coordination not approval) in the daily SITREP should replace the CONOP.

⁵⁶ AOB are also commonly referred to as a Special Forces Operational Detachment Bravo (SFODB).

can also retain one SFODA centrally located at the firebase to function as primary advisors to the ANA MTC force and QRF force for the entire AO.

The FOB provides C2 and support for the forward deployed AOBs and ODAs. Our model calls for FOBs to push all necessary assets forward to the AOB and ODA levels. For example, MI sections (to include analysts) should be attached at the AOB level where they are needed. COIN intelligence collection is a bottom-up process, thus MI sections are more effective when decentralized to the lower levels. As previously stated: the FOBs must decentralize their command and assets to the AOBs and ODAs until it feels uncomfortable to the FOB commander, and then decentralize a little more. Likewise, FOB support sections (medical, communications, mechanics, etc.) should be pushed down to the AOB level where they are needed “in the field.” Certainly an entire thesis could be dedicated to the subject of logistical support in a UW COIN plan – this topic is beyond the scope of this paper.

CJSOTF-Afghanistan must provide C2 and support for all USSF and other SOF in-country. As discussed in Chapter One, we feel that the role of the CJSOTF has been marginalized by the influence of CJTF-76. We believe that the reduction of U.S. conventional forces in Afghanistan over the next months provides CJSOTF-A with an excellent opportunity to again become the U.S. “main effort” command.

A final and important note regarding the role of the AOB, FOB and CJSOTF: All USSF elements (including the AOB, FOB, and CJSOTF) should be shadowed during their daily operations by ANA or ANP counterparts. This serves to teach, coach, and mentor the indigenous forces *so that Afghans can eventually conduct their own C2 and support for Afghan units in the field.*

3. CA, PSYOPS, CAS

The integration of CA, the Psychological operations (PSYOPS), and CAS at the lowest levels is a key aspect of our UW COIN model. First, as stated in the preceding discussion, all of these elements must be pushed down to the AOB, or even ODA level, as needed. Second, the SFODA personnel must work “hand in glove” with their CA/PSYOPS counter-parts. Once the Afghan CF secures a village, CA should be introduced to conduct infrastructure development projects. In the old “carrot and stick”

analogy, CA is the “carrot” and the CF is the “stick.” USSF from the field report the best technique is to simply ask the villagers what they need.⁵⁷ Examples of projects include wells, schoolhouses, paved roads, etc. One of the most successful CA projects reported is the Medical Capabilities (MEDCAP) which involves the introduction of USSF doctors, physician assistants and medics into the villages to provide healthcare otherwise unavailable to the local population. CA projects increase the appeal of the GOA’s presence in the village, and they create bonds of trust between the local population and the CF/GOA. Further, CA projects should employ local labor and bring much needed money into the local economy. CA is potentially one of the most powerful tools in the ODA commanders’ kit. It must be reiterated: *CA is only effective in villages that can be considered “secured” by the CF.* CA conducted in unsecured areas will not produce positive results and may very well be exploited by the enemy. The by-product of successfully implemented CA projects in the Afghan villages is a stronger bond of trust between the USSF/CF and the local inhabitants. CA projects that make a positive impact on the Afghan villagers’ lives (i.e. through the creation of jobs that boost the local economy) will create a sense of investment with the continued presence of GOA forces. Further, increased bonds of trust between the local population and the USSF/CF will result in much needed *intelligence* from the local population.

TPTs should also operate from the AOB firebases to best support the ODAs. Due to the shortage of TPTs (usually one per AOB), ODAs must be experts at running their own local PSYOPS. The so-called “PSYOPS approval process” is counter-productive and must be streamlined to support the ODAs. In fact, many ODAs in the field ignore the formal PSYOPS approval process completely and produce their own customized products locally. ODAs print their own handbills, for example, with photos of locally wanted insurgents and the reward associated with their capture. Likewise, ODAs could also print a local “newspaper” for their village which highlights the benefits of newly completed CA projects. These products are easily and quickly produced on ODA computers in the USSF team houses.

⁵⁷ Interview with Special Forces officers, Ft. Bragg, NC, September 2005.

CAS is likely to become a highly controversial issue in the coming months. Hamid Karzai has clearly indicated that the liberal use of American CAS is coming to an end. However, this constraint will probably affect the sparsely populated Afghan-Pak border area last, and thus, our model plans for the continued integration of United States Air Force (USAF) CAS at all levels. All SFODA operators must be highly proficient in both the employment of fast-movers (F-16s, A-10s, etc.) and AC-130 Specter gunship. USAF CAS provides USSF teams on the ground in Afghanistan a source of overwhelming American firepower when needed.

D. METHODOLOGY OF CLEARING AREAS OF OPERATION

This section will describe our model’s methodology for gaining control over insurgent “contested” areas of operation. We have broken this discussion down into four parts: establishing village-level control, GOA influence, the “stop light” technique, and the “oil spot” concept.

1. Establishing Village-Level Control

We strongly believe that the COIN war in Afghanistan will be won or lost at the village level. Thus, establishing GOA control over the population of the Afghan villages is a mission essential key task for USSF and their CF counter-parts. The following discussion should not be considered a “template” for success – as there is no template. We believe that our field research, however, has produced some insight regarding the process of establishing village control that is useful.

The first step in establishing village control is to conduct an *area assessment* of the village. This is a common USSF planning technique which involves determining the geographic, social, political, military, and economic “lay of the land” prior to and during USSF operations in the target AO. Constantly updated, area assessments are commonly referred to as “living documents.” The ODA can use several proven methods to sharpen their intelligence picture of the village; the best is to interview individuals from the target village who are willing to talk. Local merchants, traders, and travelers are some of the best initial contacts for information. The SFODA should employ the best of these key individuals as the first members of their “grassroots” intelligence network within the target village. The USSF/CF can also conduct low-profile “ground truth” patrols into the

village to gain a clear picture of the situation and make initial contact with local leaders. Gaining rapport with the local mullah, mayor, tribal elder, or any other “big man” is perhaps one of USSF’s greatest challenges, and it should be attempted prior to moving a large GOA-sponsored force into the target village. One of the most effective techniques for such a meeting is for the USSF to bring a third party intermediary, known to both groups, to help facilitate the meeting. An officer with the 7th Special Forces Group explained a particularly effective method which he described as the “mobile mullah” technique. In this method the SFODA would arrive into the village with a large patrol of ANA and their own GOA-friendly mullah. The GOA mullah could then facilitate the meeting between the local leaders, who were usually immediately impressed by the GOA mullah’s education as compared with the local mullah. Further, the ANA patrol appeared to be good Muslims because they traveled with their own mullah chaplain and were thereafter rarely attacked.⁵⁸ Once rapport has been established with village leaders, the SFODA and CF force should physically move into the village and occupy a defendable “teamhouse” compound. In some cases where there is a noticeable enemy presence in the village, the USSF/CF occupation should be preceded by a combined USSF/ANA movement-to-contact operation through the village and surrounding AO with the MTC force. The key to this process is that the USSF/CF makes it clear that they are not leaving after the MTC force operation, thereby preventing the insurgents’ return to the village. The first priority of the USSF/CF following occupation is to improve local security. This can be accomplished by running USSF/CF patrols, check-points, and justified by *actionable intelligence* raids to eliminate insurgent threats. Second, the USSF/CF must continually work to expand its local intelligence network. This means getting out and meeting local people, talking with them, making friends, and recruiting those willing to help the CF into the USSF/CF “grassroots” intelligence network. Third, the USSF/CF should recruit and train a village Self-Defense Force. The SDF functions as the CF’s auxiliary force that can provide extra manpower for static defense, checkpoints, basic patrols, and neighborhood watch programs. Further, SDF members recruited from the local community can also be very useful for their abilities to gain intelligence due to their access to preexisting social networks in the village. Finally, with

⁵⁸ Interview with Special Forces officers, Ft. Bragg, NC, September 2005.

basic security established, the USSF should employ the “carrot” aspect of our unconventional COIN model and begin CA development projects. CA projects provide the vehicle for the USSF/CF to expand their influence to the local economy, and most importantly, win the support of local merchants and business owners. CA projects will further strengthen the ties between the USSF/CF and the local leaders, squeezing out the influence of the insurgents, and encouraging local growth.

A final note on local control: the process described above can take many months – even years – to establish the GOA’s long-term influence in a previously neutral or hostile village.

2. GOA Influence

SFODAs must both establish and constantly work to strengthen formal and informal links between the GOA and the Afghan village which the USSF/CF occupies. This will be difficult, especially in “contested” villages with little or no initial GOA presence. USSF/CF forces should facilitate an initial meeting between the local GOA politicians (provincial governor, provincial minister, etc) and the village leadership. The goal for this process is to build a positive working relationship between all parties (USSF, CF, GOA, and the village) and further establish the legitimacy of the USSF and CF as agents of the GOA. Key points that should be made clear to the village include:

- A combined USSF/CF force will be living in the village and operating in the area until the area is pacified. At that point CF will take control of the village.
- The USSF/CF is a legitimate sanctioned force of the GOA. All USSF/CF actions are approved by the GOA.
- The CF mission is to eradicate insurgents through justice, fairness, and force if needed. The CF will protect the local population from the insurgents.
- Municipal projects, local investment, development, and medical assistance will be provided to the locals if they cooperate with the CF.
- The villagers will be expected to participate in the Self-Defense Force. Villagers are expected to provide the CF with information.

- It is within the best interest for the villagers to assist the USSF/CF because security, stability, and prosperity for the villages, tribes, and GOA will result.

The Afghan villagers must understand that the USSF and CF operate with the authority of the only legitimate government in Afghanistan – the GOA. In turn, the SFODAs and CF must work tirelessly to eliminate any doubt that the GOA can provide security and stability for the Afghan villages.

3. The “Stop Light” System

In order to eventually transition to complete Afghan control, a systematic color methodology can be used which is similar to that employed by Sir Gerald Templar during the British Malayan Emergency. Templar designated portions in Malaya “white areas” once guerilla forces were determined to no longer be operating in these areas, thereby freeing the locals from “irritations and hindrances of food controls, curfews, policy identity checks or searches.”⁵⁹ Once an area was coined “white,” Britain gradually withdrew forces and relinquished control to the Malayan government.

In a somewhat similar fashion in Afghanistan, when USSF and the CF initially occupy a “contested” sector it will be designated a “red” sector. As security is established, SDF companies are stood-up, and the GOA gains control, the USSF can potentially reduce its force to a “split” ODA of six men and begin the transition of responsibility to the Afghan CF. These sectors will be classified as “yellow.” The sector will be designated “green” once all security related responsibilities in the sector are handed over to the Afghan forces. Essentially, this methodology will allow an area to be cleared of insurgents while subsequently leaving the Afghan people and government in control, not the insurgents. Once all sectors in a given AO are “green” USSF can move to a new “red” AO and repeat the model, thereby spreading stability and governmental control throughout all of Afghanistan. If the Afghan CF is trained adequately and has the ability to operate self-sufficiently, then USSF will eventually work themselves out of a job.

⁵⁹ Cable, 88.

4. The “Oil Spot” Concept

The “Oil Spot” concept is key idea in the employment of a successful unconventional COIN campaign. An example of how this process can succeed was demonstrated by USSF in the Buon Enao Program located in the Darlac Province of Vietnam. SFODAs “worked hand in hand with the people to fortify their village; constructed shelters and an early-warning system and closely regulated the movement of people in and out of the area.”⁶⁰ Local volunteers were recruited, armed, and trained to function as a paramilitary force working with the SFODAs. The self-defense militia concept was designed to spread like an “oil spot” on water. Within a year, the “oil spot” concept expanded to approximately 200 villages, with only five SFODAs controlling the area with a small contingent of Vietnamese Special Forces.⁶¹ The SFODAs were able to integrate themselves at the “grassroots” level to effectively neutralize the influence of the Viet Cong (VC) insurgents in the USSF inhabited villages. Our UW COIN model employs the same “oil spot” concept – a small number of USSF control a large, rural country with an indigenous CF.

E. NEUTRALIZING THE WARLORDS

One of the profound aspects of the CF concept is its ability to neutralize the negative groups within a local society. In Afghanistan, warlords and their militias have had a strong grasp on many villages. This is counter-productive to the CF mission. The CF has to be the sole protector of the people at the local level. In order for a CF to be effective, the local people must view the warlords’ protection role as biased, unfit, illegitimate, and obsolete. Three avenues can be taken regarding the warlord militias: assimilation, alienation, or eradication. The preferred method is to assimilate the warlord militias into the CF because they already have a knowledge base regarding population control, they are equipped and familiar with the use of weapons, and most importantly, they are extensively tied into the villages’ pre-existing social network. These social networks can provide the essential intelligence required for the targeting of insurgents.

⁶⁰ Krepinevich, JR., 70.

⁶¹ Ibid, 71.

If the local warlord militias are not willing to serve as auxiliaries of the CF, the CF must take action to displace militias within the local population to the extent where the militias are neither needed nor supported by the population. The CF must prove to be fair, law abiding protectors of the people, and must consistently demonstrate that the warlord militias are an “old world” hindrance to security and stability rather than an asset. In other words, the CF must replace the role of the warlords’ militias. If the CF effectively controls the population, the militias will no longer have a role and will become alienated from the people, thus becoming obsolete.

Lastly, the possibility of the warlord militias joining the insurgency is a constant reality. If the militias become a threat, the CF will target them as insurgent elements. The CF force must use all of its assets to eradicate such militias. Popular support will shift from the warlords and insurgents to the CF and central Afghan government only when the CF provides the security for the people to live in safe and stable villages.

This concludes our proposed alternative model for an Unconventional COIN campaign in Afghanistan. The next chapter will discuss further support for our model, summarize our key points, and conclude this paper.

III. SUPPORTING DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Over the last few decades, regular armed forces – including some of the largest and best – have repeatedly failed in numerous low-intensity conflicts where they seemed to hold all the cards. This should have caused politicians, the military, and their academic advisors to take a profound new look at the nature of war in our time; however, by and large no such attempt at reevaluation was made.⁶²

- Martin Van Creveld

A. KEY OBSERVATIONS

This section will discuss the most important observations from our study of unconventional COIN. These observations are based on our three case studies (Appendix C- Malayan Emergency, Appendix E- CIDG in Vietnam, and Appendix F- USSF in Orgun, Afghanistan); a COIN literature review (McCormick, Komar, Krepinevich, Van Creveld, others); and most significantly, on our interviews with returning veterans of the U.S. conflict in Afghanistan. Thus, we believe the following observations best represent the “essence” of successful UW COIN: First, COIN population control strategy works – “clear and sweep operations” generally don’t. Second, paramilitary constabulary forces and local self-defense forces are more effective than conventionally trained and organized troops. Third, “grassroots” intelligence collection at the local level is mission essential. Finally, USSF should be the U.S. “main effort” in lieu of conventional U.S. forces.

1. Population Control Instead of “Clear And Sweep” Operations

Conventional “movement-to-contact” operations, which attempt to “clear and sweep” an area of insurgents, only serve to temporarily establish security for the local inhabitants. This protection is lost when the government troops eventually depart the area of operations and relinquish control back to the insurgents. In order to defeat an insurgency, two key goals must be achieved: “first to protect the population, and second to isolate them from the guerrillas.”⁶³ This can only be done by government forces that

⁶² Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War*. (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 222.

⁶³ Hamby, 55.

permanently live and work within the local population. The COIN force must proactively conduct daily foot and vehicle patrols; build a network of local informants; establish checkpoints and conduct identification checks; conduct vehicle and house searches; and execute precision raids when supported by *actionable intelligence*. Civil Affairs and infrastructure development is important; but ultimately successful only when conducted in areas controlled by the government.

The importance of population control vs. “clear and sweep operations” is emphasized in Dr. McCormick’s Diamond Model (see Appendix A). McCormick says the government must have control over population *before* it can effectively target the insurgents; likewise, government efforts to target the insurgents before population control is achieved will be fruitless. Further, classic COIN population control methods were effectively used by both the British Constabulary in Malaya, by American Special Forces CIDG camps in Vietnam, and by ODA 361 in Orgun, Afghanistan. In both examples the COIN strategy focused on control of the indigenous populations and the physical separation of the friendly population from the insurgents instead of conventional “clear and sweep” operations.

2. Use of Indigenous Constabulary and Self-Defense Forces

Conventional battalions of infantry are not the organizations best-suited to conduct COIN population control. Indeed, we need a COIN force with a “profound new look”⁶⁴. Thus, this paper proposed the employment of an Afghan Constabulary Force (CF), whose primary mission is to protect and secure the local population through a combination of paramilitary police and military population control tactics. We assert that every “contested” Afghan village should have a squad or platoon-sized element of local Afghan CF (see Appendix B) with USSF advisors. Additionally, the CF should be reinforced by a locally recruited Self-Defense Force (SDF). The SDF is a multi-purpose outfit which can provide additional manpower for CF physical security, basic patrols, checkpoints, and other light infantry operations where additional combat power is needed. The SDF also is an excellent source of local intelligence.

The primary support for our Constabulary Force concept comes from the British example in Malaya. The USSF-led CIDG in Vietnam is the primary model for our

⁶⁴ Van Creveld, 222.

indigenous SDF. In fact, the CIDG model was used with great success by ODA 361 in the Orgun case study (Appendix E).

3. Importance of Local or “Grassroots Intelligence”

Unlike conventional military forces, USSF and their Afghan counterparts operating *through, by, and with* the locals can gain the trust and credibility needed from the local population to get information about the insurgents. Likewise, the CF mission to provide 24/7 protection for the local population will prevent the insurgents from taking retribution against government informants. Thus, a “popular” CF, armed with tips and information, can then target insurgents and destabilize the insurgent support network. We firmly believe that the establishment of indigenous intelligence networks at the “grassroots” level (i.e., in the Afghan villages) is the most import element to defeating insurgency.

All three case studies in this paper (Malaya, Vietnam, and Orgun) repeatedly show the importance of local intelligence networks.

4. U.S. Special Forces in Lieu of Conventional U.S. Forces

In his *Notes on Low-Intensity Warfare*, Edward Luttwak concluded that “low-intensity wars should belong to the Special Forces unambiguously and fully, with other Service components coming in as need under Special Forces direction, to be the servants and not the masters.”⁶⁵ We believe Luttwak’s statement rings true today in Afghanistan, as it did in the case of Vietnam.

We assert three reasons why USSF is the best choice to organize, train, equip, and advise our proposed Afghan CF. First, USSF soldiers are the U.S. Army’s specialists in Unconventional Warfare (UW), specially trained to conduct “military and paramilitary operations, predominantly conducted through, with or by indigenous or surrogate forces”⁶⁶ USSF soldiers are schooled in Afghan cultural awareness and indigenous languages. In November, 2005, conventional forces proved their lack of Islamic cultural knowledge by burning the bodies of two insurgents. The Afghan Foreign ministry spokesman Naveed Moez summarized the action when stating that the “the burning of the

⁶⁵ Edward Luttwak, “Notes on Low-Intensity Warfare,” *Parameters* (December, 1983): 333-342.

⁶⁶ *Department of the Army, FM 3-05.20, Special Forces Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 2-1.

bodies is against our Islamic and Afghan traditions. It is totally unacceptable and it should not be repeated by any means under any circumstances again."⁶⁷ Although the US troops claimed the burning was for hygienic reasons, the incident could possibly undermine U.S. and GOA efforts by drastically reducing population support. Second, USSF soldiers are some of the Army's most experienced noncommissioned officers and officers – all are adept at highly independent operations and require little supervision. In short, USSF are ideally suited for the decentralized nature of COIN in Afghanistan's "Indian Country." Finally, USSF is one of the few U.S. military units to have cracked the code at employing "grassroots" Human Intelligence (HUMINT) in the field.

Both the Vietnam CIDG and Orgun, Afghanistan case studies in this paper serve as valid examples of USSF competence and ingenuity during COIN operations.

B. CONCLUSION

We believe that this study provides adequate support to confirm our original hypothesis: The Unconventional COIN campaign model, as presented in this paper, will effectively provide the long-term stability needed for a legitimate Afghan government, defeat the lingering Taliban/AQ insurgency, and expedite the withdrawal of conventional U.S. troops from Afghanistan. We have supported this statement based on the examination of three case studies (Malayan Emergency, CIDG in Vietnam, and USSF in Orgun, Afghanistan); a COIN literature review (McCormick, Komer, Krepinevich, Van Creveld, others); and most relevantly, on our interviews with returning veterans of the Afghan war. In summary, we have found the following points best capture the "essence" of successful UW COIN: COIN population control strategies work – "clear and sweep operations" generally don't; indigenous constabulary forces and local self-defense forces are vastly more effective COIN forces than conventionally trained and organized troops; "grassroots" intelligence collection at the local level is mission essential; USSF advisors should be the U.S. "main effort" in lieu of conventional U.S. forces.

Finally, we must acknowledge that UW COIN is not simply a military problem – in fact, it requires effective counter-insurgents to be both skilled local politicians as well

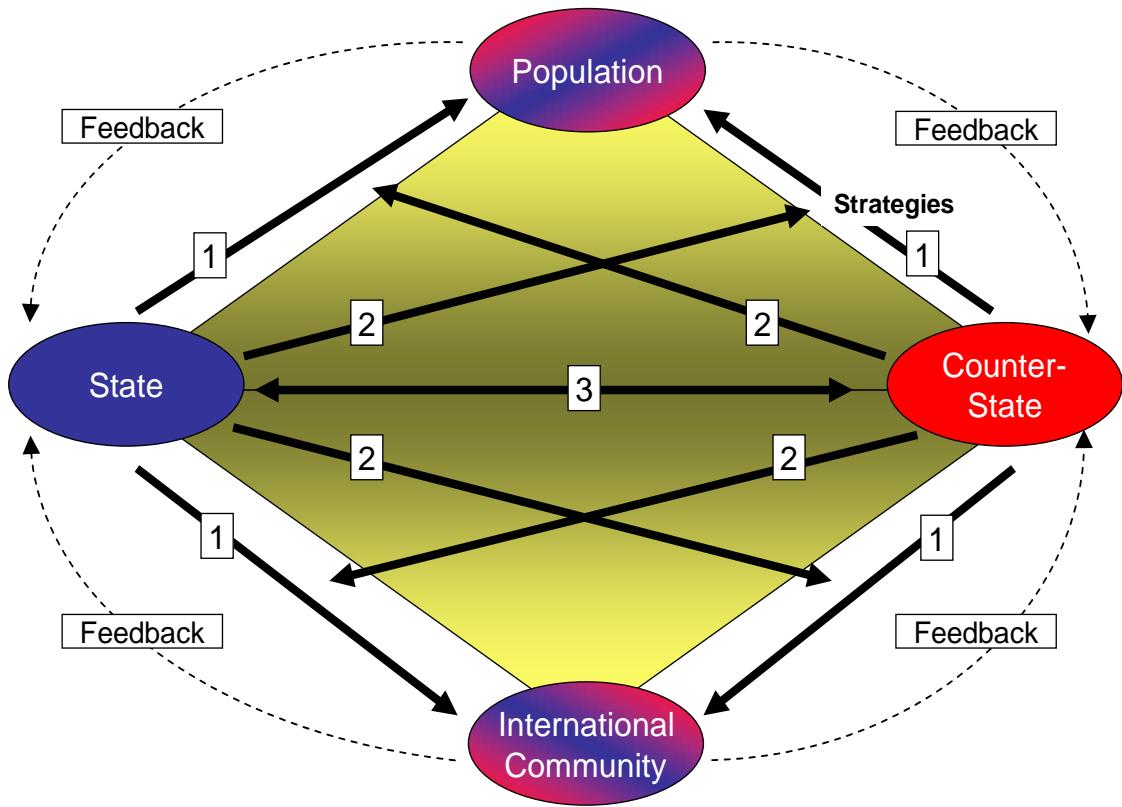
⁶⁷ Daniel Cooney, "Soldiers' Punishment Criticized," *Monterey Herald*. (November 29, 2005): <http://montereyherald.com>.

as unconventional military strategists. The UW COIN model presented in this paper is a significantly “new look” compared to the current conventionally-dominated COIN campaign in Afghanistan. We firmly believe that a U.S. re-alignment to UW COIN, using the ideas discussed in this paper, is the best long-term solution for defeating the reemerging Taliban/AQ insurgency and establishing stability and security in this war-weary land.

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APPENDIX A: THE DIAMOND MODEL

Figure 1. Dr. McCormick's Diamond Model⁶⁸



Players

- *Counter-State*: Comprised of any individuals passively or actively supporting the insurgent force. The counter-state strives to remove the current government or occupying forces through violence and supporting operations.
- *State*: Current government or occupying force in the disputed country or region typically in combat with the insurgent force acting in a counter-insurgent role. In addition to military measures, the state also uses civil, diplomatic, informational, and economic means to counter the insurgents.
- *Population*: All non-combatants, neutral individuals, in the disputed area that have the ability to support the state or counter-state.

⁶⁸ Gordon H. McCormick, "A Systems Model of Insurgency." Department of Defense Analysis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA 93923.

- *International Community*: Consisting of external nation states and international organizations that have the ability to provide support for the state or counter-state.

Strategies

- 1) *Gaining Support of the Population*: Both the state and counter-state must win the support of the populace in order to gain the trust, intelligence, and supporting measures to defeat each other. Whoever controls the population, will be victorious.
- 2) *Disruption of Opponent's Control Over the Population*: Deny the support of the population from the opponent in a preemptive manner by proving the illegitimate authority of either side. The state must drive a wedge between the population and the counter-state, just as the counter-state strives to disrupt the link between the state and the population. Either side must maintain legitimacy in order to control the population.
- 3) *Direct Action*: Violently strike against the opponent to disrupt operations, destroy or capture forces, and overall weaken the opposition's means to continue.

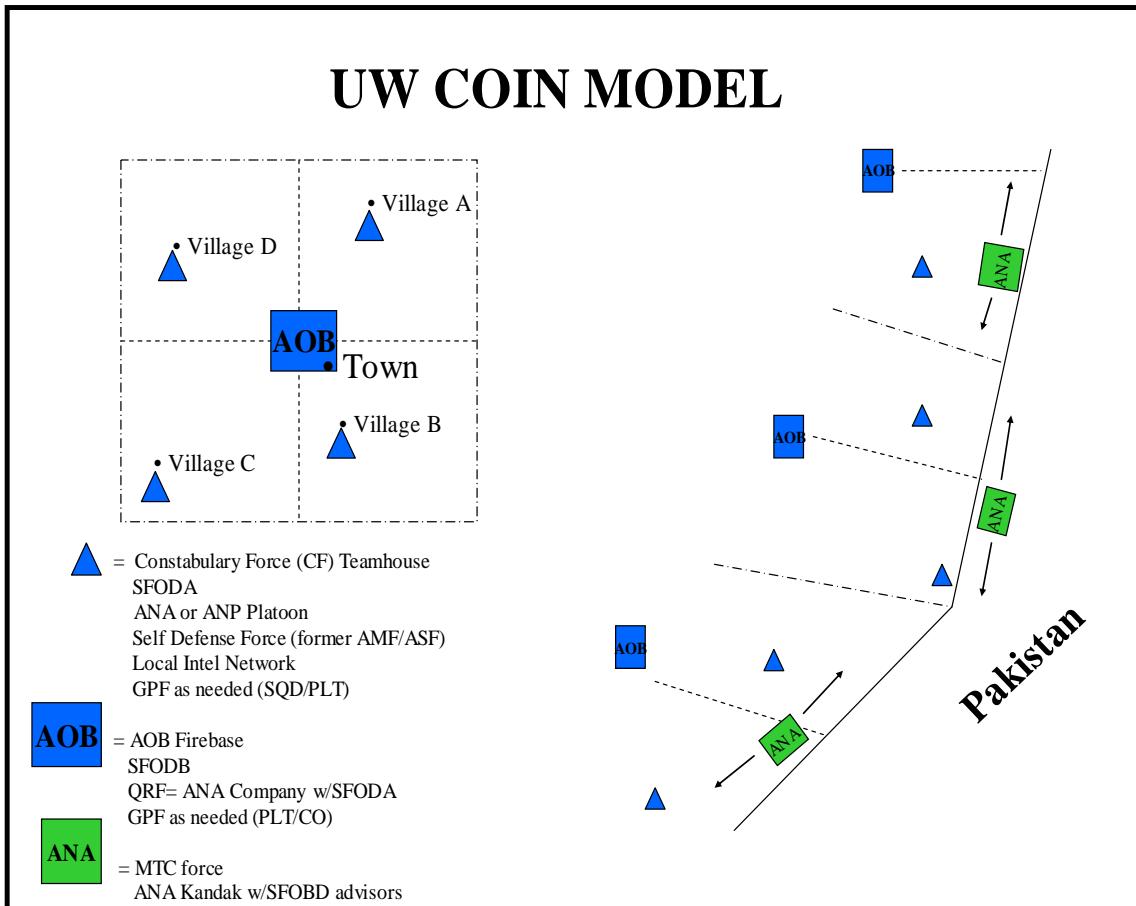
Important Note: These strategies should be executed in order 1-3. Typically, conventional forces make the mistake of immediately conducting direct action operations (Strategy 3) before controlling the population (Strategy 1). The result is poor intelligence, excessive collateral damage, exhaustion of resources, and unnecessary casualties.

Additional Notes

- The strategies for the lower half of the diagram operate in the same fashion as the top. As in their contest for control of the population, the state and counter-state must compete for the favor of the international community regarding legitimization and support (operationally, financially, diplomatically, etc.) in lower Strategy 1. Both sides must also target the support from the international community to their opponent, as depicted in lower Strategy 2.
- If possible, the top half and lower half strategies of the diagram should be implemented simultaneously in order to best facilitate the goals of each side.
- The order of the strategies should be followed sequentially, however, if “golden opportunities” arise that would provide benefit, then such a chance should not be ignored. Example: Insurgent leaders are identified in Strategy 1; therefore, direct action should be implemented although normally not used on a large scale until Strategy 3.
- *Feedback* is essential for both sides to measure the effects they are having on the population or international community. With the analysis of effects, opponents can flex their operations and tactics to be more beneficial to their cause. Mechanisms must be in place to assess each side's operations.

APPENDIX B: UW COIN MODEL

Figure 2. UW COIN Model



- A SFODB will centralize itself at a firebase (FB) as the primary C2 and support element for up to six SFODAs within the example AO, depending on the size of the AO (the example above shows four SFODA sectors). The ODB will also control a Tactical PSYOP Team (TPT), a Civil Affairs team (CAT), a kandak (battalion) of ANA, a SFODA for the ANA QRF/MTC missions, additional support elements, and U.S. General Purpose Forces (GPF) for base security if needed. The ODB commander will have complete control over the AO including the QRF/MTC force (ODA, ANA, and GPF).
- Initially, the SFODAs will occupy sectors in the AO with their ANP/ANA Constabulary Force (CF) by occupying teamhouse compounds in “red” (contested) villages. The SFODA commander will have complete operational control over his sector. Once the SFODA commander has established condition “yellow” (transition), he can expand to “split team” operations at his discretion. When feasible, the SFODA split teams will establish additional CF presence in

adjacent villages as depicted. The goal is to achieve condition “green” (secure) in each village, which will then allow USSF to work themselves out of a job and leave the Afghan CF in charge.

- GPF can be used to reinforce the AOB’s FB or, in particularly hot villages, to augment SFODA security in platoon or squad sized elements. GPF may also be used for supporting MTC when needed. GPF will also be needed to secure the FOB and CJSOTF in “rear” areas.
- The ANA will be utilized for FB security, MTC, QRF, and CF if ANP are not available. The ANA MTC force will also operate in the AOB’s AO to control the dead space between the CF and the border. This force will be advised by the SFODA garrisoned at the AOB FB.

APPENDIX C: CASE STUDY-MALAYAN EMERGENCY

Case Study: Malayan Emergency



In 1948, as the British Empire was recovering from the devastation of WWII, was also actively engaged in a “small war” on the peninsula of Malaya. Initially named the “Anti-Bandit Campaign,” the Malayan Emergency was an insurgency driven by Chinese communists for government control.⁷⁰ Beginning in the 1920’s as the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), the Malayan Peoples Liberation Army (MPLA) served as an armed component of the MCP in opposition of Japanese occupation forces. General Secretary of the MCP, Chen Peng, leading a mixed group of Mao and Chiang supporters,

⁶⁹ Hamby, 55.

⁷⁰ Cable, 71.

perceived imperial Britain as weak due to withdrawal of troops from India and Palestine. Chen believed Britain's current financial struggle and relinquishment of colonial control provided an ideal time for violent action in order to convince Britain to withdraw support from the Malayan government. However, Britain, being in dire straits financially, relied heavily on the tin and rubber procured from Malaya. This major source of income would not be turned over to the MCP.

Constrained economically, Britain understood that a massive military campaign was not plausible. British leadership, beginning with Lt. General Briggs, realized that the way to vanquish an insurgency was through population control. The Briggs Plan sought to clear Malay from south to north by isolating guerrillas from the populace through deprivation of support, thus forcing the communists into the open where they could be targeted. Using a joint military/civic methodology, Briggs followed 5 principles to a successful COIN in Malaya:

1. Rapid resettlement of squatters under surveillance of police and auxiliary police.
2. Regrouping local labor in mines and on estates
3. Recruitment and training of criminal investigation and special branch personnel
4. A minimum level of troops throughout the country to support police and concentrate forces for clearing priority areas
5. Police and army operating in complete accord, with joint operational control on all levels and close integration of police and military intelligence⁷¹

The plan created a state and district war executive committees composed of Malayan, Chinese, and British members with chains of command integrated into the support of civil powers. Sir Gerald Templar, the High Commissioner, declared that the battling of insurgents and the Malayan civil administration were “completely and utterly interrelated.” The combination of civilian and military authorities, in conjunction with justice and the appropriate use of force, demonstrated the legitimacy of the government through security and protection of the populace to the point where the communists were

⁷¹ Hamby, 59.

no longer supported by the populace and maintained little room to operate. Amnesty incentives and rewards for population cooperation greatly enhanced the COIN.

One of the key factors leading to Britain's success was their reliance on constabulary forces, not ineffective military "clear and sweep operations." British military were augmented to train and guide civil law enforcement operating in a unilateral role. Much of the time, British soldiers were dedicated to police tasks implementing civil affair policies (roadblocks, searches, resettlement, food and resource denial). By intertwining the military with the local law enforcement units, the insurgents were denied local support, intelligence about the insurgents was reliable, and the Malayan people took a strong nationalistic pride in their country. The people formed a trust with government forces, not the insurgents.

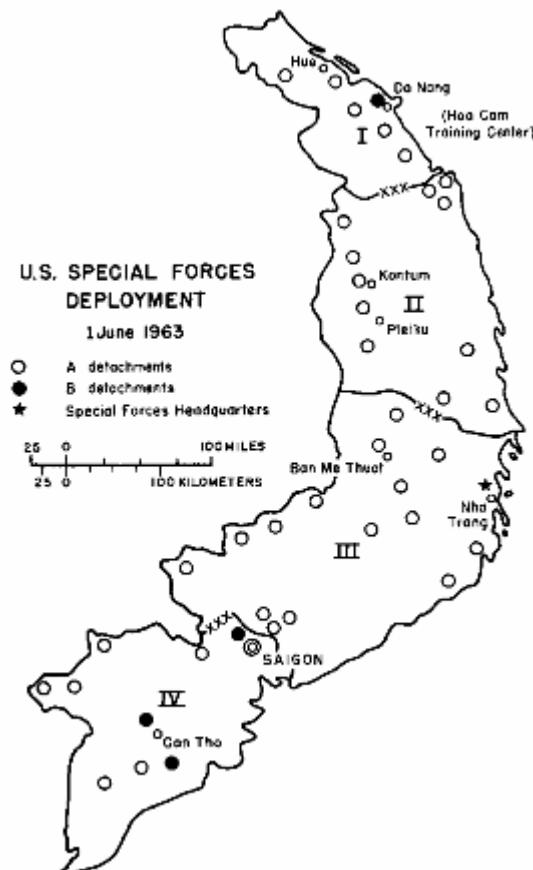
After 12 years, the British successfully quelled the insurgency within Malaya. Not only did Britain aid Malaya, but withdrew from the country once the insurgency was no longer a threat and the Malayan authorities and military were able to operate independently. Ultimately, the British succeeded through professionalism and perseverance, and by replacing "military measures with military activities in support of a civilian authority and civilian oriented program."⁷²

⁷² Cable, 92.

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APPENDIX D: CASE STUDY-CIVILIAN IRREGULAR DEFENSE GROUP

Case Study: Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG), Vietnam



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The Civilian Irregular Defense Force (CIDG) program was started in the rural “contested” villages of South Vietnam by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 1961, and was executed on the ground exclusively by U.S. Special Forces (USSF) A-teams. The CIDG program focused its efforts on two of South Vietnam’s most important regions: the Central Highlands, which was adjacent to the strategic Ho Chi Minh Trail; and the Mekong Delta – a hotbed of Viet Cong (VC) insurgent support. The most notable

⁷³ “Civilian Irregular Defense Group Program,” (n.d.): <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/books/vietnam/90-23/map4.GIF>.

aspect of the CIDG program was the remarkable success of its village self-defense militias. In fact, the CIDG was very similar to another indigenous force called the “Home Guard,” which was employed brilliantly by the British during the Malayan Emergency of the 1950s.⁷⁴

The original concept behind the CIDG was a classic population-based counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy. Twenty-six USSF teams were sent into rural South Vietnam to train and advise pro-government indigenous militia forces for village self-defense. Each of the ODAs was directed to establish a 1000 man self-defense force and fortify their individual A-team camps. Further, the USSF trained and advised 300-400 man “Strike Forces” at each camp for rapid offensive action against the local VC. The program was an “unqualified success”⁷⁵ from 1961 to 1963. The USSF and their CIDG controlled over 200 villages, many of which had previously been considered VC, and commanded a militia force of 33,000 men.⁷⁶ The USSF advisors and their CIDG patrolled and protected the local populations. USSF also “established the first grass-root intelligence system to collect detailed, systematic information on the NLF (National Liberation Front) and the VC.”⁷⁷ The protection provided by the CIDG forces allowed for the introduction of civil affairs programs to include medical aid, improved sanitation, water projects, and agricultural improvements. It was hoped that neighboring villages would also see the benefits that the CIDG villages received from the government and would reject the VC insurgents. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) assisted with many of these projects. Life got better for the people in the CIDG villages, many of whom were from religious and ethnic minority groups that had never been included in the South Vietnamese government’s plan.

Ironically, the CIDG program was doomed in 1963 when it was turned over to the Department of Defense (DOD), specifically the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam. (MAC-V). MAC-V disregarded the CIDG’s success as a territorially-based

⁷⁴ R.W. Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of a Successful Counterinsurgency Effort* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1972), 40.

⁷⁵ Thomas Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 86.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 85.

COIN force and directed that USSF shift its use of the CIDG from village defense to offensive operations against the VC. Indeed, the CIDG was better trained and motivated than most South Vietnamese regular outfits.⁷⁸ In spite of USSF protests, the CIDG was misused by MAC-V as conventional light infantry for movement-to-contact operations outside their local areas, and without local support. Most unfortunately, these operations left the CIDG's home villages open to VC attack in their absence. The CIDG program never recovered from this significant miscalculation.

There are three important lessons to take away from the CIDG case. First, the strength of the CIDG was with the program's village self-defense militias. The CIDG militias provided security for over 200 villages by 1963 in a classic example of population control-focused COIN. Second, the CIDG militias provided their USSF advisors with an invaluable source of "grass roots" intelligence. Indigenous forces such as the CIDG, which live and operate within their home villages, have superb access to the community's pre-existing social networks. Finally, the last lesson concerns the demise of the CIDG when it was turned into a conventional movement-to-contact force by MAC-V. Territorially-based indigenous units such as the CIDG are highly effective COIN forces in their home areas of operation. MAC-V's employment of these units in a conventional infantry mode, however, proved to be a major strategic mistake.

⁷⁸ Thomas Adams, *US Special Operations Forces in Action* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 86.

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APPENDIX E: CASE STUDY-ORGUN; AFGHANISTAN

Case Study: Orgun, Afghanistan⁷⁹



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In the summer of 2002, follow-on U.S. Special Forces (USSF) A-teams⁸¹ were deployed by helicopter into “contested” Afghan villages on the Pakistan border. Their mission was to find and destroy remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda, collect intelligence, and provide local stability. ODA 361 was one of these A-teams from the 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), sent to occupy a former Soviet airbase near the village

⁷⁹ Interview with Special Forces officer, Monterey, CA, November 30, 2005.

⁸⁰ Mapquest, (n.d.): <http://www.mapquest.com/atlas/main.adp?region=afghanis>.

⁸¹ Also called Operational Detachment Alpha or ODA.

of Orgun in June, 2002. At a time when most USSF in Afghanistan were preoccupied with direct action (DA) missions to “hunt down” fleeing terrorists, ODA 361 would take a completely different approach, focusing on controlling the village of Orgun using classic population control methods. This approach worked splendidly, resulting in an almost complete pacification of the Orgun area of operations (AO) in about three months.

One of the first problems ODA 361 had to deal with in Orgun was a local Afghan warlord called Zeke. Zeke was a disreputable commander with the Northern Alliance who had “pacified” Orgun following the demise of the Taliban. His main source of income and power was a “customs house” which he ran on the main road into Orgun. Zeke initially told the A-team that he would work with the Americans; however, this relationship soon fell apart when some of Zeke’s men shot at two USSF sergeants in town. ODA 361 kicked Zeke out of town at gun-point and turned his “customs house” on the main highway over to the counsel of village elders in Orgun. This act immediately established rapport between ODA 361 and the counsel of village elders (commonly called a “shura” in Afghanistan), as Zeke was both feared and hated for the “customs taxes” that he extracted from travelers.

With the local warlord marginalized, ODA 361 now focused on building a paramilitary security force to provide stability in Orgun. It is no coincidence that ODA 361’s actions in Orgun closely resemble the early Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program in Vietnam. In fact, the senior USSF leadership of ODA 361 realized that their mission would only be successful if it was executed “through, by, and with” a large paramilitary indigenous force. Thus, ODA 361 organized, equipped, trained, and advised three 100-man Afghan Militia Force (AMF) companies. Eager recruits were not hard for ODA 361 to find; in fact, many former mujahadeen with ample combat experience against the Soviets signed-up. A USSF non-commissioned officer advised each AMF company, which performed the following missions: firebase defense, security operations, basic patrolling, cordon and search, reconnaissance, and intelligence collection. During the apex of their operations, ODA 361 conducted a five-day reconnaissance patrol with their AMF on the Pakistan border, clothed in indigenous attire, and mounted on camelback. The AMF, who lived in the local community,

provided ODA 361 with an excellent flow of intelligence. AMF payday, when all the troopers would return home, provided ODA 361 with some of their best intelligence tips.

ODA 361 also initiated a novel “grassroots” civil development program in Orgun. This involved the use of Army Civil Affairs (CA), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and locally-funded development projects. For starters, the senior engineer on ODA 361 employed a local 200-man work force that was used to build bunkers, fill sandbags, string concertina wire, and construct walls for improved firebase defense. Salaries paid to the work force, contractors, and even the militia force, went directly back into the local Orgun economy. ODA 361 hired a contractor with a dump truck to move stones from a nearby river to pave the bazaar in Orgun, greatly reducing the dust and making the bazaar a better place for hundreds of local residents. The shura, which now had a modest income from Zeke’s customs house, could pay for their own local public works projects. ODA 361 worked closely with the shura to recommend new projects and contractors. For example, the bazaar contractor was appointed the “Commissioner of Roads” with the blessing of the shura, and later paved all the roads leading to the bazaar as well. ODA 361 helped open a local scrap metal business, which cut up old Soviet tank hulks and sold the metal to dealers in Pakistan – pumping more money into the local economy. ODA 361 worked with Army CA to help open the first ever girls school in Orgun and appointed Orgun’s “Commissioner of Education.” ODA 361 assisted with the establishment of a new pharmacy in Orgun, and helped a local Afghan doctor (trained in Pakistan) to be appointed the town’s “Commissioner of Health.” The A-team helped a local electrician repair two huge Soviet generators, which were then donated to the town. Orgun had electricity for the first time ever and the electrician was appointed the “Commissioner of Electricity.” All of these development projects had two important effects: First, life in Orgun got better than it ever was before. People began to appreciate the Americans’ help. Second, the Orgun population-at-large reached a tipping point. Locals now willingly gave *actionable intelligence* to the USSF at the slightest hint of Taliban or Al Qaeda presence in Orgun, which allowed ODA 361 to target these threats before they could act. For all practical purposes, the Orgun area of operations (AO) was pacified.

Ironically, ODA 361's approach in Orgun was viewed as "touchy feely"⁸² by their higher command. Perhaps this was because they did not rack-up a high enemy body count, or because their sector was generally quiet when compared to the other AOs in which USSF remained behind the wire of their firebases until it was time for a DA hit. Regardless, ODA 361 was pulled out of Orgun by September 2002 – for use in the "hot" area of Deh Rawooh to augment a unilateral USSF DA force. ODA 361's 300-man AMF, comprised of highly effective local COIN troops, was disbanded and not integrated into the new Afghan National Army.

There are many lessons to be learned from the Orgun case. We believe the following are the most important: First, ODA 361 was successful in Orgun because they focused their efforts on control of the population rather than immediate targeting of the insurgents (see Appendix A- Dr. McCormick's Diamond Model regarding population control). In other words, ODA 361 effectively denied the enemy Orgun because it controlled the "contested" space. Second, just as in the CIDG case study in Vietnam, the best COIN forces have proven to be indigenous troops that are recruited from the local population. ODA 361's AMF was both highly effective and an excellent source of local "grassroots" intelligence. Finally, the Orgun case clearly shows that COIN is not just a military problem. ODA 361's use of Army CA, NGOs, and local initiatives are all excellent examples of "out-of-the box" unconventional military thinking with regards to the development of local infrastructure and public works. All of ODA 361's development projects resulted in increased rapport with the shura, the local merchants, and the Orgun population-at-large. Most importantly, this improved relationship resulted in a steady flow of actionable intelligence with which ODA 361 could effectively target the enemy.

⁸² ODA 361 was actually referred to as the "touchy feely" team by their DA-focused superiors and peers.

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